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INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0597
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0361
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1440
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0438
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0240
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1606
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RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 0054
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0002

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OSLO 000454

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/30/2017

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SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN UPDATE: SRI LANKA PEACE EFFORTS

Classified By: Acting DCM Kristen F. Bauer, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. On April 30 Sondre Bjotveit, MFA Adviser in the Peace and Reconciliation Section, updated us on Norwegian peace efforts in Sri Lanka. He described MFA Special Envoy Jon Hanssen-Bauer's recent meetings with UK and South African government officials, in addition to sharing personal observations concerning the ever-worsening Sri Lankan political and military situation. Bjotveit also discussed Falk Rune Rovik, a convicted Norwegian murderer who the MFA views as a destabilizing threat to the peace process and also a personal threat to Minister of International Development Erik Solheim. End Summary.

Norwegians Speak with UK, South African Officials

12. (C) Hanssen-Bauer traveled to London last week to consult with the UK Foreign Office and MP Paul Murphy, who previously traveled to Sri Lanka and will soon return to support existing facilitation efforts. Similarly, Hanssen-Bauer recently visited Pretoria, where the GSA Foreign Ministry expressed an interest in continuing to engage, but not initiate, peace dialogue efforts. Bjotveit believed GSA interest was motivated by the strong, and politically powerful, Tamil community. Although originally part of the Indian diaspora during British colonial rule, the South African Tamils strongly sympathized with the plight of their Sri Lankan brethren. South African President Mbeki and GSL President Rajapaksa have separately met during an international conference in Havana, and shared experiences, with both leaders expressing an interest in continued dialogue. Former South African governmental officials have also shared views about life under apartheid rule with Sri Lankan colleagues, focusing upon the South African reconciliation efforts. Both UK and GSA officials emphasized to the Norwegians that the GON's role as facilitator was not to be supplanted, and that Norway's facilitation efforts were supported. Bjotveit did not describe how either the UK or the GSA would specifically complement the GON facilitation efforts.

Thoughts on Military, Political Situation

13. (C) Bjotveit reviewed the increasingly tense Sri Lankan political situation and worsening violence. Although the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) still technically exists, it seems

more form than substance. For example, while the GSL publicly advocates negotiating as a means to end its conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the GSL Secretary of Defense publicly resolved that a solution would

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likely occur only in two to three years, which offers a less-than-enthusiastic support of quickly ending the present conflict. Alternatively, the LTTE is feeling increasingly isolated on the global stage, with officials believing the only remaining option is to fight.

14. (C) Militarily, the Norwegians are concerned that GSL successes will only cause LTTE fighters to disperse and decentralize, raising the specter of an uncontrollable insurgency. The LTTE seems to also justify its recent aerial bombings of GSL oil reserves as a means of inhibiting governmental air attacks on the Tigers.

Solheim's Safety; Seeming GSL Endorsement of Detractor

15. (C) According to Bjotveit, the PST (Norway's primary intelligence agency) is closely following the actions of Falk Rune Rovik, an outspoken critic of Minister Solheim. Previously jailed for murder in 1997, Rovik served ten years of detention in a mental health institution. Viewed by Norwegian authorities as dangerous, he frequently speaks out against Norway's role in the Sri Lankan press, and most recently visited Toronto, Canada, where he purportedly met with members of Amnesty International. His views, which include accusing Norway of terrorism in Sri Lanka, have proven problematic and embarrassing to the GON, particularly given that Rovik is a Norwegian citizen,

16. (C) Bjotveit believes that Rovik is supported by the

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GSL, and receives funding from Sri Lankan hard-liners. For example, the GSL Ministry of Defense recently posted an op-ed from Rovik and its website also previously advertised one of Rovik's speaking engagements. Bjotveit denied that these inflammatory efforts tacitly (if not overtly) supported by the GSL were detracting from the GON's facilitation efforts. He admitted, however, that the Norwegian cultural predilection for dialogue was being tested by Rovik's destabilizing actions, which the MFA has responded to in statements to Sri Lankan press.

Comment

17. (C) The GON continues to press the peace process, while recognizing that both the GSL and LTTE have violated the CFA. Rovik further complicates matters and may pose a potential threat to Solheim's personal security. The GSL's apparent encouragement of Rovik's public diatribe against GON efforts is one more destabilizing factor. Although the resilient Norwegians seem calm and focused, their steadfastness to resolving the Sri Lankan crises is being sorely tested by the deepening Sri Lanka violence and Rovik's protests.

WHITNEY